

DARE to be You

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Program of Distinction Category:

Healthy Lifestyles Categories

- Healthy Relationships and Good Decisions

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Knowledge and Research Base

Both home and school environments contribute to the risk and protective factors for children's ultimate success and avoidance of long term problem behaviors. Some risk factors for multiple problem behaviors include poor school success, lack of parental efficacy, punitive child rearing practices, disorganized home environment (or other poor parenting skills), lack of teacher efficacy, and a poor relationship between family and school (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992). Protective factors include positive social cognitive skills, motivation, and persistence with difficult tasks, positive school bonding, and problem solving skills (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992; Bandura, 1986). Also, the relationship between home and school affects the child's success in school (Shure, 1997).

In the home, mothers who feel effective and see their role as that of a teacher are more involved in cognitive activities and can affect children's lifelong view of learning (Connors, & Epstein, 1995; Grolnick, Benjet, Kuroswski, & Apostoleris, 1997). However, parents differ, by culture and education in child rearing beliefs, and therefore, school goals and characteristics they consider important to foster in their children vary (Tiedman, & Faber, 1992). Consequently, people in the school system need more knowledge and understanding of families (Slaughter-Defoe, Nakawaga, Takanishi, & Johnson, 1990). Teachers' expectations for performance can positively affect children's achievement and sense of competency. Children's self-esteem, motivation, and coping can be adversely

affected by the feeling of failing to live up to a teacher's expectations (McKnight, 1999). Teachers with personal and teaching efficiency have been shown to enhance resiliency factors in young people (Dweck, & Elliot, 1993).

Initial research conducted for the DARE to be You program was completed with eight to twelve year-old youth and was concluded with a two-year follow-up of youth in the program. This information was used for a model of building self-efficacy and responsibility, the development of social and problem solving skills, and the delayed/reduced onset of the use of alcohol and tobacco. Further research with schools showed that the DARE to be You component for schools and teachers (K-12 curriculum) significantly enhanced teacher efficiency. In addition, research with families showed significant increases in parental efficacy, home management skills, and an increase in developmental levels (cognitive and social) in the children (Fritz, Miller-Heyl, Kreutzer, & MacPhee, 1995). This research followed all of the participants for two to five years. The database showed continual increases of both the children's developmental attainments and use of constructive parenting strategies by the parents (i.e., limit setting, nurturing discipline strategies) continued to increase two years post intervention and was statistically significant when compared with control peers. The knowledge gained in the research of the two previously successful school and family DARE to be You components were combined in this project to form a "Bridge" between the youth, the parents, and the teachers.

Needs Assessment

In the communities where the DARE to be You Bridges program is being tested, participants in family programs have repeatedly reported to community agency personnel that they feel alienation from the school system, especially families from the tribal and low income communities. Although this may seem to be a very specialized population, it actually is a microcosm of what happens throughout the nation when families and schools represent different cultures or socio-economic systems. Trust and positive relationships may never occur. The poor school completion rates are one indication that the schools are not aiding students with their success in school. In one sample high school in the focus communities, the drop out rates for Native American males was 71%, females, 29%; for Hispanic males, 58.3% and for females, 14.3%; and for Caucasian youth, an average of 27% dropout rate combined.

The DARE to be You Program has also has worked with people within the school systems to ensure that the system works both ways. School personnel, even with the best of intentions, may hold preconceived beliefs about certain types of families. This pattern continues generation after generation to a deleterious effect on schools, parents and children. The deficiency of school success in these areas is also linked to high alcohol and substance abuse issues, teen pregnancy and violence. The need to bring together families and school personnel in a series of child-centered, non-disciplinary workshops to build skills, relationships and understanding was highly supported by local steering committees. These committees consisted of families, school personnel and representatives from other local agencies.

Goals and Objectives

The goals of the DARE to be You program included working through the multiple systems of families and schools to (a) enhance relationships between families and schools, and (b) enhance the skills of parents, teachers and youth to strengthen youth with increased school success and enhanced cognitive and social skills.

Specific Objectives:

- Parents will show significant increases in enhanced perceptions of and increased positive communication with teachers and schools, enhanced parental efficacy, increased parent-child relationships and communication, increased parenting skills such as home management (i.e., limit setting and nurturing discipline strategies).
- Teachers will significantly increase their ability to identify strengths in the participating families, to identify with cultural differences, increase personal teaching efficacy, increase skills to foster children's social competence, and enhance their relationships with families and children.
- Children will significantly increase social skills, behavior management skills, persistence in completing difficult tasks, personal efficacy and developmental status as compared to control peers. They will also have more positive perceptions of school over control peers.

Target Audience.

The DARE to be You Bridges program targets children grades K-2, his/her parents, and teachers. Siblings are also encouraged to attend with the rest of the family. The program is being tested in two markedly different socio-economic and cultural settings: small rural Navajo communities in Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico where the population is 99% Navajo families attending community based schools, and a separate population in Southwestern Colorado, also rural with mixed ethnic cultures including Anglo, Hispanic and Native American. (See the evaluation plan for how the families are selected into the program).

Program Design and Content

Type of program

The Bridges program is a Special Interest/Short-term program.

Methods used to deliver the program

The Dare to be You Bridges Program is an 11-week series of interactive workshops involving K-2 students, their parents or other adult family members, and the children's teachers. Each week there is a 30 minute meal and social time, a parent-teacher-child activity (10-20 minutes) focusing on building the child's self esteem, responsibility, or other key concept. These are activities that are guided by trained facilitators at each session to enhance the skills of both the family members and the teachers as they work together with the child. Then, adults (parents and teachers) work together while youth have separate but concurrent workshops. The weekly workshops last 2 ½ hours, including the meal. Families and teachers must participate in a minimum of 20 hours of the activities to receive the workshop incentives. Data on participation is collected by a time sign in sheet monitored by staff. Siblings are encouraged to attend and have their own age-related curriculum (Pre-school, 3-6th grades).

Adults (parents and teachers) participate in interactive workshops to enhance self-efficiency and developmental levels (Session 1-3), family and classroom management skills thereby improving environments to promote, self-management skills, (Session 4-6) improved family relationships communication between the teachers and family members (Sessions 8-9) and skills for problem solving (Sessions 10-11). Parenting and teaching strategies are integrated into each session. For children, the program focuses on self-efficacy development, responsibility, social and communication skills, problem solving, decision making, and empathy development. It also focuses on enhanced positive perceptions of school and teachers. These intermediate resiliency factors are linked with reduced use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, and violence. Staff for the workshops includes an adult program facilitator, a child program coordinator and trained teens that assist in the child program as children educators. Teachers are recruited first and then their families or potential families are invited.

Curricula and/or educational materials

Curriculum from two previously researched components of the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension DARE to be You program were adapted to form the DTBY Bridges curriculum. These are the DTBY K-12 school curriculum and teacher training program (shown to make significant increases in teaching efficacy and use of prevention strategies in the classroom), and the DARE to be You program for families. Extensive research and evaluation shows that the family curriculum makes significant improvements in parental efficacy, limit setting, nurturing parenting styles, and parent-child communication for adults. The children showed significantly increased social and cognitive goals (child developmental level) over control peers (Miller-Heyl, MacPhee, & Fritz, 2000; Miller-Heyl, MacPhee, & Fritz, 1998).

In addition, the curriculum for training the teen educators was adapted specifically for this program from the DTBY Peer Educator curriculum. Curriculum Guides for parents and teachers, focus children and siblings are available at darecort@coop.ext.colostate.edu or Dare to be You, 215 N. Linden St. Cortez, CO 81321. Phone 970-565-3606. Replication training of 20 hours is also available.

Partnerships or collaborations

The DARE to be You Bridges project works in conjunction with the Navajo Bureau of Indian Affairs, Montezuma Cortez School District RE-1, Dolores School District RE-4Am, and Mancos School District RE-6. We also have a steering committee that meets quarterly and consists of representatives from Montezuma County Social Services, Health Departments, Partners of Montezuma County, the three local school districts, the Pinon Project, and parents who have participated in the classes.

Program Evaluation

Process

The project had extensive process evaluation components. The external evaluators conducted focus groups and individual interviews with parents, teachers and youth. The six-month follow-up survey included an anonymous classroom environment scale which is analyzed by the external evaluators. Representatives of the teachers and parents report yearly to the steering committee. Program staff

completes weekly workshop logistics sheets that include attendance, activities, response of the participants and other related details. The log sheets are analyzed by evaluators to determine component completion. To date, 95% of the participants in the experimental group have completed the entire twenty hours. Both teachers and families report, to external evaluators in focus groups or interviews, that they have seen significant improvements in the relationships between the schools and families.

Outcomes and Impacts

Intervention effects are expected from adult family members, teachers, and youth. Teachers, parents, and youth all complete self reports. In addition, parents and teachers complete surveys on youth as described below. Classrooms are divided into control and experimental groups to strengthen the research. Teachers and families are recruited to participate in either a control or experimental group and are randomly selected into one of the two groups. Surveys are administered orally to parents, teachers and children with six-, 12- and 18-month follow-up surveys. The evaluation logic model is tied directly to the program objectives: (a) The parents complete personal surveys on parental efficacy, child rearing practices, depression, social support and their perceptions of school and family-school relationships. They also complete surveys on parent-child relationships and communication, their children's self management skills and efficacy. (b) Teachers complete surveys on their teaching efficacy and perceptions of families and surveys on individual youth to assess the child's behavior management and school adjustment and child efficacy. (c) Youth complete surveys to assess personal efficacy, and their relationships and perceptions of school. Parent self reports are cross checked by the staff through weekly log sheets that record any evidence that the parents are using (or not using) new parenting strategies on the weekly workshop log forms. These are pending analysis at this time.

These survey instruments are all previously validated instruments and more description can be accessed by contacting darecort@coop.ext.colostate.edu. The data collection on the project is approximately 50% complete. In a preliminary evaluation on August 2004, 142 baseline surveys and 81 six-month post tests from the parents were entered into the database. Statistically significant, at least $p < .01$ intervention effects are observed on eight outcome measures. Parent data shows increases in children's social skills, parents' limit letting and child centered rearing practices, their view of family/school communication, parents' self-efficacy and the parents' belief that they should be involved with the school. Parent data also showed a reduction in children's aggression and parents' self reports of harsh punishment.

Analysis of teacher data reveals three areas of significant improvement. Participating teachers show they are more likely to endorse parental involvement, believed both parents and teachers should encourage a child's success, and that they were more satisfied with being a teacher.

Communication to stakeholders

The DTBY Bridges project holds quarterly meetings to communicate with stakeholders. Our steering committee consists of community leaders, social services

and parent participants. We also provide generic reports to our participants on the results of data collected.

Program Sustainability

The program was developed through input from key community stakeholders who have continued to serve on the steering committee. These include the directors of key agencies (health department, department of social services, schools, etc). For previous DTBY programs, research data has convinced these same contributors to use local resources to continue services. The commitment for local sustainability is the same for this project. If these key community players see the program as filling a viable need in the community, and this is supported by research, local funding sources will be applied to the project. This is currently funded as a demonstration program with a potential for national replication. Sustainability as a national program will be affected by the acceptance into the national registry for effective prevention programs and funding to replicate the program to test for universal effectiveness.

Replication

DTBY will seek funding to replicate this program in additional sites. The DTBY Bridges program should be replicable by any community where there are barriers between families and schools that negatively affect the children's success and resiliency factors. It is unique because it brings together teachers, parents and children, is sponsored by an agency other than the school system in a series of very positive, and provides educational and enjoyable workshop experiences. It focuses on strengthening families and schools and solving issues before they become serious problems.

The DARE to be You family program was selected as one of the first national replication model programs by the Centers for Substance Abuse Prevention, (Substance Abuse, Mental Health Services Administration), the Office of Juvenile and other federal and regional prevention agencies. Because of the existing national training program available through DARE to be You and because of the national Cooperative Extension network, replication opportunities are very possible. Manuals and a training design are already in place. Information dissemination through websites, conferences, and cooperative extension can readily make this program available nationwide.

Rationale and Importance of Program

The Family School Bridge project provides a link between families and their children's school and teachers. Research has shown that children who find success at school are less likely to become involved in violence and substance abuse as they mature, and that children who are raised by competent parents are likely to be successful in school. The DTBY Bridges project helps build self-efficacy in parents, and through positive interaction with school personnel, increases the belief that they should be involved in their child's school and their learning process. Children learn social skills and acceptance and their perceptions of school become more positive, thereby increasing the protective factors in a child's life. Teachers learn to better collaborate with parents, emphasize family strengths and have greater self-efficacy. Teachers, families, and children who have participated in the program all say that it has made an enormous difference in their

relationships with each other and in many ways that can only positively affect the outcomes on the children.

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